

Gas Prices

No more price gouging

Last year, gas cost about \$2 a gallon. Now it's \$3, and that extra money is giving oil companies record profits.

I wrote a bill in 2002 that would make this sort of price gouging illegal. The House passed the reform; the Senate killed it. Next session, I'll reintroduce it.

This reform gives the governor the authority to declare a price-gouging emergency after a natural disaster. I was motivated to write the bill after huge spikes in gas prices right after 9/11, including one station in Moses Lake that started charging \$5 a gallon.

Energy freedom

Would you rather buy your oil from the Saudis or put money in the pocket of local farmers?

The era of cheap oil is over. We need to do more, not only to protect our clean air, but to protect our pocketbooks. I believe we need to push for energy freedom – to stop relying on imported oil and to be self-sufficient, growing more of our fuel right here in Washington.

Our state has some of the smartest, most innovative people, scientists and farmers in the world. I believe we can meet this challenge.

Not only is energy freedom good for the environment, it's good for jobs, since relying on local power would insulate us from wild spikes in gas and power prices.

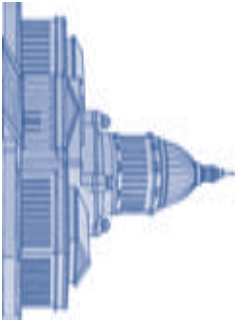
I'm working with other lawmakers to achieve energy freedom by:

- giving incentives for citizens, businesses and governments to use hybrid vehicles and cleaner fuels like biodiesel and biogas (ethanol);
- jump-starting a local market for biodiesel and biogas so our local farmers benefit; and
- passing reforms to encourage clean, cheap, renewable power like wind and solar.

We know this technology works. Our local school buses are running on cleaner fuel so our kids aren't breathing dirty fumes. And today, we have hybrid diesel buses running in Seattle.



Fall 2005 Update



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Representative
Geoff Simpson



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Fall 2005 Update

Dear neighbors,

What can we do about traffic gridlock and the high price of gas? And how can we prepare for a natural disaster in Washington state – an earthquake, Mt. Rainier mudflow or tsunami?

I'm searching for solutions to these problems. Washington state isn't immune to disasters and changing events, whether here or elsewhere:

- We're paying \$3 a gallon because of Hurricane Katrina, the war in Iraq and growing thirst for oil from China and India;
- Our state doesn't face hurricanes, but we are vulnerable to earthquakes, tsunamis, Mt. Rainier, wildfires and floods; and
- Roads and bridges in our state need to be bolstered so (a) they don't fall down in an earthquake and cripple our economy, and (b) they can handle the load if we need to evacuate.

This newsletter includes information on the nature of these challenges and what we, as a state, can do to prepare so we can weather any storm.

I'm interested in what you think. Our district lies near a major fault line and includes valley neighborhoods that could be buried by a Mt. Rainier mudflow. Does your family have an emergency plan? Do you think we can rely on the federal government, or do you think our state should plan on doing the heavy lifting in the first week of an emergency?

Please take a moment to write, call or e-mail. Your opinion is important to me.

It is an honor and privilege to serve as your representative. Thank you for taking the time to read this. I hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely yours,

Geoff Simpson
Covington

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Emergency Preparation

Disasters and poverty

Everyone's seen the devastating mix of disaster and poverty that happened in New Orleans and wondered, "Are we safe here in Washington?"

Our state doesn't suffer from hurricanes and the endemic poverty of the Deep South, but we are not immune. There are 700,000 people living in poverty right here in Washington state. We may not face hurricanes and tornados, but we are at risk:

- Scientists say we're overdue for the Big One, an earthquake that would collapse major bridges like the Alaska Way Viaduct and the 520 Bridge;
- A tsunami would devastate our coastline and threaten the entire Puget Sound, which could act like a funnel;
- Hot mudflows from Mt. Rainier have repeatedly covered valleys with 30 feet of mud where cities stand today – Orting, Sumner, Puyallup and Kent;
- Doctors expect another global flu pandemic like the Spanish Flu of 1918, which killed millions; and
- Almost every corner of Washington is vulnerable to wildfires or floods.



FEMA photos/Jocelyn Augustino/Bob McMillan

What we can do

Experts tell us we can't expect the federal government to send help for at least 36 hours.

I believe Washington state needs to take action so we can protect our families and neighbors when a natural disaster strikes.

That means making sure state agencies, counties and cities are working together. It means giving local police and firefighters the information and resources they need so we're all going off the same playbook.

As a professional firefighter, former city council member and now chair of the Local Government Committee, I'll work with other lawmakers to make sure our state has a plan that brings everybody together to protect us during a disaster.

Preparing your family for a disaster

Chances are that after a major disaster, so many people will be affected that your family won't get immediate help. So it's smart for every family to have a plan:

- a safe place to rendezvous;
- alternative ways of communicating with each other, as the telephone and cell phone system usually gets overloaded during a disaster;
- emergency supplies and food that are enough for three days.

Family Communications

- Decide where and when to reunite your family when a disaster happens.
- Choose a person outside the immediate area to contact if family members are separated. Long distance phone service will probably be restored sooner than local service. Do not use the phone immediately following a disaster.
- Make sure all family members know about your disaster plan. Also, relay this information to babysitters or others who might be in your home.
- Know the policies of the school and daycare your children attend. Make sure your child's emergency release card is up to date. Designate others to pick up your children should you be unable to pick them up.
- If you have a family member who does not speak English, prepare an emergency card written in English with that person's name, address and any special needs such as medication or allergies.

Emergency Supplies

- Have at least a three-day supply of food, water, clothes, medical supplies and other necessary equipment for everyone in your family. (See the "Suggested Emergency Kit Checklist" below.)
- Keep a small amount of extra cash available. If the power is out, ATM machines will not operate.
- Keep an extra pair of eyeglasses, house keys and car keys on hand.

Home Safety

- Locate shutoff valves for water, gas, and electricity. Learn how to shut off the valves before an earthquake or other disaster.
- Conduct earthquake and fire drills once every six months.
- Identify "safe spots" in each room.
- Establish all the possible ways to exit your home. Keep all exits clear of debris.
- Know the locations of the nearest fire and police stations.

Vital Information

- Make copies of your vital records and store them in a safe deposit box in another city or state. Make sure your originals are stored safely.
- Take photos and videotapes of your home and your valuables. Make copies and place them in a safe deposit box in another city or state.
- Enter emergency phone numbers into your cellphone.

Resources on the Web

Washington State Military Department–Emergency Management Division: www.emd.wa.gov

Federal Emergency Management Agency: www.fema.gov

American Red Cross: www.redcross.org



Suggested Emergency Kit Checklist

- Water: 1 gallon per person per day, plus a water filtering device
- Food: non-perishable canned goods with can opener, granola bars, protein bars, "comfort" foods like cookies or hard candy
- Portable radio or Tone Alert weather radio
- Extra set of clothes with sturdy shoes
- Flashlight with extra batteries or light stick
- Waterproof matches and candles
- Multi-purpose pocket knife
- Whistle
- First Aid kit, including a three-day supply of prescription drugs, and first aid handbook
- Entertainment items like a deck of cards
- Duct tape and plastic if you need to shelter-in-place
- Cash

Put together small versions for the office, school and car.

Remember, emergency supply kits should be designed to fit your needs.